

Lyndale Neighborhood Association

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November 14th, 2011

RE: Proposed Revision to the Community Participation Guidelines

To: Neighborhood and Community Relations Commission

On behalf of the Lyndale Neighborhood Association (LNA) we are submitting the following comments related to the proposed changes to the Community Participation Program guidelines.

LNA is concerned that if the proposed guidelines are adopted in their current form they will create confusion and a significant amount of extra work for neighborhood organizations as the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department (NCR) tries to administer a set of guidelines intended for one purpose – community engagement, living under another program's rules - NRP.

We would also like to take the time to register our strong disapproval with the action taken by the Mayor and City Council last December to take \$10 million of neighborhood funding from some neighborhoods and reprogram it to fund this program and staffing for the NCR Department for the next two years. This is a direct violation of the commitment the Mayor and City Council made to neighborhood organizations when they adopted the Framework for the Future and has helped to create a high level of distrust that is preventing neighborhood organizations from partnering effectively with the City and working to create a better Minneapolis.

We would ask that the following principles be kept in mind as changes are considered to the guidelines:

- This program should be supporting neighborhood organizations work to engage and involve community members in their neighborhoods and their city.
- The guidelines should be easy to understand and have a defined process that provides neighborhoods with a clear path to accessing the available funds.
- The amount of red tape (planning, reporting, partnering) should be in relation to the resources provided.

We would like to see the following specific changes made to the guidelines prior to their adoption by the NCEC, new NRP Policy Board, and City Council.

- There needs to be a clearly defined purpose and process for why neighborhood organizations should be completing both Community Participation Plans and Neighborhood Priority Plans. The Community Participation Plans used for this last year, were generally easy to complete and should be where resources are focused over the next 18 months. Under the proposed guidelines it is almost impossible to understand what the purpose of Neighborhood Priority Plans is, how they relate to the Community Participation Plans, and how neighborhood organizations' limited resources will be spread between them.
- We would urge that the Neighborhood Priority Plans be removed altogether or at the very least minimized.
 Neighborhood Organizations are working with very limited resources and adding an extra layer of red tape, will only make it difficult for Neighborhood Organizations to be doing the work in their neighborhoods that is so important to Minneapolis.

- There should be no change in eligible expenses from the previous year's Community Participation Guidelines.
 Specifically, neighborhood publications should continue to be able to take paid advertising and food should remain an eligible expense.
 Neighborhood publications are critical to keeping people informed with what's happening in their communities and provide an excellent way for local businesses to connect with potential customers in their area.
- The new program should not blindly adopt existing NRP Policies that were designed to govern NRP Phase I and NRP Phase II, those were different programs designed for different times.

We think that is critical in these times that the City of Minneapolis live up to its commitment to fund neighborhood organizations on an ongoing basis. Neighborhood organizations play a critical role in bringing all of Minneapolis' community members together to help make Minneapolis a great city to work, live, and play in. The funds taken from neighborhood organizations should not be used to pay for City staff.

We support the following changes/updates to this year's guidelines:

 Neighborhood organizations should be able to use these funds to support the implementation of their NRP Phase I and NRP Phase II Plans.

While LNA would like to see improved relationships, including formal partnerships, between neighborhood organizations and City departments, the layering of signed agreements as a part of Neighborhood Priority Plans seems like a unnecessary addition of bureaucratic morass that is likely to add a significant amount of time and hassle to the process. LNA would encourage the NCEC and NCR to look for other ways to encourage these partnerships.

We appreciate your willingness to consider these issues and your commitment to Minneapolis. Please let us know if you would like to discuss these issues further or if there is any additional information we can provide.

Sincerely,

Richelle Reetz President